

## Socializations in Home-Based Programs

Emmy Adams: OK. So, really excited to be able to share some ideas with you. I was very lucky to be able to observe a socialization in Milwaukee last fall, and it was so exciting to see the kids come in and they knew their peers, and the parents would come in and start checking in with the other parents. This was at a site that was both center-based and home-based, so they had the opportunity to have a designated space for their socializations. And one side of the classroom was set up for infants and young toddlers, and then the other side of the classroom was set up for the older toddlers.

So, they had a meal together and then they had, everybody was in a circle together and the facilitators, the home visitor staff, talked about what they were gonna be doing today. So, essentially at this particular socialization they were using a curriculum that had socialization lesson plans and activities as part of the curriculum. So, for that day, they were looking to have parents follow their child's lead and also they asked them to observe, you know, because there's so many fun things to do in the center, so like what does your child like and what do they don't like so much and why? And then they came together again at the end to talk about that experience back in circle time and then started talking about the next socialization to start building some interest for the next time they got together.

The things that we're gonna go over today are exactly what you were asking for in the chat box. We're gonna talk about ideas that we've heard from your peers, both when we were out at training sessions in different regions across the country, and also the ideas that people have been sharing on MyPeers. So, let's get started by just talking about what do we think is important about socialization.

Emily Marshall: Sorry, Emmy, I'm here now, can you hear me?

Emmy: Yeah. Hi, Emily, so glad you could. So, I was just gonna go ahead and ask them to, in the chat box, tell us why socializations are important. So, if you'll just take a minute and type that into your chat box. Why do you think socializations are important? Because we know that the home-based program is offered, all the services are delivered through home visits and group socialization, so that's a big part of the program, and why is that? What is so important about that socialization time?

Emily: So I see, children interact with other children, right? We get parents and children, oh my gosh, interacting together. Look at all these comments everybody.

Emmy: Relationship building. Yeah. Yeah. I see.

Emily: Peer-to-peer connections, that's so huge for parents. Social experiences, supporting that parent-child relationship, that is so huge.

Emmy: Yeah, gets them out of being isolated.

Emily: Yeah, the social aspect of it sort of, I think, can be a really beneficial for parents who maybe don't have a lot of opportunities to do other social things.

Emmy: Yeah, a chance to focus on them and their children in this really busy, chaotic world is just, you know, to have a chance to set aside a time. I think families really appreciate it. When they finally figure out how, you know, to get there, that seems to be the most challenging part for everybody. Have fun, an exclamation point. Absolutely.

Emily: I like, too, giving parents opportunity to lead.

Emily: Yeah. Right. Right. that joint planning part.

Emily: Right, giving parents the chance to think about some of the school readiness goals and maybe including even their family goals around what they hope to do and then being able to include those in the socialization opportunities. Children socializing with each other. Yeah, it's one thing to see your 2 year old at home all alone, but, boy, see your 2 year old in a group with other kids and there's only one cool yellow truck, it's gonna be a problem, right? It's a different situation.

Emmy: That's right. Wonderful, these are great. We can see that you absolutely know the benefits, I'm sure that's why you're here today to learn because we do hear that it is challenging to get families, it's such a busy, chaotic time for all of us when there's so much to do. It's really challenging to get parents there. So, some of the things we want to do today is talk about how do we meet that performance standard of having a minimum of 22 group socializations for Early Head Start, and then a minimum of 16 group socializations for preschool Head Start.

And even more than meeting that standard is just really taking advantage of this great opportunity. There's a reason that it's required and I think it's because, like, you're gathering here to talk with your peers and everybody can see that this is challenging to do this work. The parents need that time, too, to come together and talk about what might be challenging with parenting.

Emily: Yeah, Emmy, that's so true. I know for myself I can, you know, I can definitely attest that raising children is really tough, and having the opportunity, like you're saying, to have a relationship with other parents is such a big support, those peer-to-peer relationships, just finding out like, "Oh, we're having similar experiences," or, "Oh, your child's doing that, my child's doing that, too. I didn't know if that was normal or something was going on."

And I mean a lot of those people sort of mentioned some of the benefits of not feeling so isolated. Building up a network of support system, you know, maybe you don't have family right there, and so being able to have the opportunity to build support systems and, you know, feel less overwhelmed and, you know, maybe even build up friendships that support families who maybe would feel depressed, which we know is fairly prevalent, so. But we actually have a video here that we'd like for you to see, and it is a video about the benefits of having the opportunity to gather with other parents.

[Video begins]

Narrator: Science has shown that strong, positive relationships between parents and their children are critical to healthy development, and that parents' connections to friends, neighbors, the community as a whole, is equally important to helping them be good parents.

Joshua Sparrow: Humans are social animals. We really need to be connected to other people when we're raising our children. And when parents are alone and isolated, they're really burdened by their stress and they don't have anybody to unload it on and it actually has been shown that when parents are all by themselves and isolated, they may be more at risk of developing depression and even of abusing their children because of the isolation. So, it's really critical to do everything that we can to connect parents to each other. [Video ends]

Emily: So, in that video there was a little bit of conversation around the benefits of having the opportunity to talk to other parents and then, you know, sort of this, the benefits of coming together and supporting these relationships for children and parents. And so, we thought, and look at you already jumping in there.

Emmy: [Laughing]

Emily: We wanted to know, what do you think are some of the benefits for parents, but also some of the benefits for children around having these kinds of opportunities? So yeah. Oh, socialization opportunities for young children. Yes, that is a good thing to have. A chance for parents to share with each other their experiences, yeah. Oh my goodness! Language development, being around other children. And then for parents, getting to see like, "Oh, that's typical development." Connecting families with the community. All of those things, wonderful.

Yeah, I think about sort of all of these benefits and what maybe parents are telling you are the benefits for them if they're sharing that with you. And what a great kind of advertising or attraction opportunity that might be to help other parents think about like, "Hey, there's so much that you can get out of socializations," and these are some of these wonderful things. That it might help parents feel like it's really worth it to get there.

Emmy: Right. So, like I said, there's been a lot of sharing of information on the MyPeers Home Visiting Community about a number of home visiting topics. The one that comes up regularly is socialization. So, I put up a poll not too long ago, in the fall of last year actually, and I just asked people to share their participation rate. You know, not that, you know, everybody might not know exactly what it is right off the top of their head, but I thought it would be nice to get a general idea so that people would think, you know, maybe I'm doing as well as I can expect to do or maybe I can raise the bar a little bit.

So, what you can see here on this pie chart is that the greatest number of participants to this poll, 39%, said that their participation rate was between 16 and 30%. But then we had quite a few that were 31 to 50%, 51 to 70%, and we had one that was 71 to 90%. So, my question was, and I'll bet your question is, how did these people get these higher participation numbers? So, with a little bit more digging I found out that some of the people that were getting the highest participation rates, one had, it was a housing community where everyone in the community actually lived in that development, in that area, and they came to the community center.

They had almost 100% participation, because obviously transportation's not a problem. But the other side of that coin for me was really thinking about, wow, if parents can easily get to the socialization, they're coming and they love it. So, I think that's really helpful information for a couple of reasons. And then another one, this was at a training session that I was at, and one of the participants shared that they had 100% participation rate regularly and that it was a Latino

community and they centered their socializations around holidays and celebrations that were important in their culture. And, of course, they connected those to their school readiness goals and to the work that they were doing with families already in home visiting. But the fact that they made it into a celebration where everybody was participating, everybody had a role, everybody was excited to come each time. It was like the woman that posted earlier about fun, exclamation point, exclamation point. Yeah, they evidently they just really loved it. So, I think the message there is just really finding out what works for your families and what will get them to participate and be excited about it.

Emily: Yeah, that's really wonderful. I love the idea of really figuring out from your families and thinking about what's really important and helping them out with that. Or sort of meeting that interest and being there for them. So, we actually have a poll. Some of you were sort of throwing out your estimate of how many, what percentage you thought maybe participation rate was for your socializations, and we're wondering, you know, what do you think, even if you don't know, what's your guess of what the participation rate might be for socializations?

So yeah, we have a lot of people participating in the poll, and I think probably we can go ahead and show the results here, but I think you'll see that — that it mirrors what we saw. Maybe there's even a little bit less participation than we thought in the MyPeers poll. So, I think while we share those results what I'd like to do is take this one step further and ask you, does your program have a goal for participation rate? Like, is that something that you're working on, do you have a percentage that you've already determined that you would like to have as the percentage of families who come to your socializations? What's your goal?

Emmy: One hundred percent. I love it. Not surprised, you know, the home visitors are just a group that have a really high bar and high expectations. This is just the way we are, I love it. Everybody has really high goals for themselves.

Emily: Yeah, so it does, it looks like a lot of people have goals around increasing the number or are shooting for 100%, 80%, at least more than 50%. So yeah. So, that's great that we have that, have some goals, but now we have to kind of figure out like how do we meet those goals? If we want to figure out how to get parents to attend and to engage when they're there, one of the biggest things we really need to do is we need to find out from parents and family members like what do you want to get out of socializations? How do you want to use that time? Like, what would make that time useful and valuable to you?

So, we actually ... Some home visitors in Washington State said that parents shared that some of what they really like to get from socializations was that I want to be a better mother, things like I want to understand my child more, I want my child to have a better childhood than I did, right? These are really common parenting goals and wishes. And I think that as we do in Early Head Start and Head Start these parents are sort of saying what they want is a stronger relationship between the parent and the child, which is always the goal of our programs.

So yeah, this is — this is one reason why socializations can be so effective is because it's an opportunity for parents to get a better understanding about child development and school readiness and then thinking about how that might relate to family goals. And when parents talk about this desire to have a better opportunity for their children, to understand their child

better, to have this stronger relationship, that's kind of one way to say like, "Hey, one of the great benefits of socializations is, you know, you can connect with other parents which can help you feel better about parenting." Think about ways that you can connect the school readiness goals and for parents and then always remember that parents really want what's best for their children. And if we help them think about socializations as an opportunity to explore that, I think that is really attracting for parents as well.

Emmy: So Emily, I was able to, as I said, I've talked to some of the Head Start programs across the country when I get to go out and do trainings and learn from them what they're doing and then share that learning with other people. So, one of the things that I heard recently when I was out doing a session on socialization in Region 10 was that there was a participant that shared that they were having trouble getting people to participate, to show up for socializations. And so, what they did was just set a time a month where every home visitor for that month was actually having a conversation with the family about you know, what would it take to get you to come out to the socializations? What are your barriers to participation? Is there a concern? We don't think about it sometimes, but some people are cautious about going to new places or meeting new people.

So, really having those individual conversations, it wasn't a questionnaire, it wasn't another piece of paperwork, but it was just the dialogue that the home visitors were taking the time to capture, and everybody was doing it at the same time and then at the end of the month they sorta like had a conversation and talked about what they'd learned and then developed some strategies based on that. So, part of what they did, too, was ask about, you know, thinking about the joint planning and involving the parents, would ask them like, talked about what their hobbies and interests were and that was just mind-boggling how many different activities came up that parents could actually share some expertise, lead some activities and lead some songs and music and nutrition information and cooking, there's like all kinda ideas came up when they found out what people's interests were.

And it also built some excitement just having those conversations. So, what that meant when I heard that idea was just it's really, as busy as we are and all the things that we have to do, we have to take the time to stop and think about, is this important for our program? If it is, how are we going to make a real defined effort on finding out how we can get families there? And it's really from talking to them and involving them in the process.

Emily: Yeah, that's such a huge strategy right there is really just talking to families.

Emmy: As you can see, and we saw in the chat box, these are the things that that program in Region 10 found out from their families to why they're not attending. Really everybody's just really is just tired and busy and too many obligations. So, they had to figure out a way to get families there, addressing all those barriers. So, at that same session I heard from another grantee that said, you know, one of the things that was really important to them was creating a place of belonging. But before we go to that, I think we have a video here.

One of the things we heard in Region 10 was that families love the idea that they could bring their kid somewhere and have like a messy place, you know, they have sand tables and water tables and they can paint and this is something that a lot of families just don't have the space or

inclination for. So, let's watch a video now about kind of a messy activity and see how much the ... Look for how much the child enjoys the activity and how the mom sort of reacts to that. So, think about the messy place. [Video begins]

Parent No. 1: Tyler, there's some puzzles over there.

Parent No. 2: LJ, you want to go play with something else? Want to play with the puzzle?  
Firetruck. Play with firetruck?

Teacher: If we have any children who really like to cook, we'll be in the kitchen. We have the play food and everything, there's a whole kitchen over there. Parent No 2: You want to go cook?

Child: I want to cook.

Parent No. 2: Come on Jamiah, let's go cook. Let's go cook. Let's go in the kitchen. Come on. Let's go in the kitchen. You want to go in the kitchen?

Parent No. 1: LJ, you like playing with the sand table? Look, let's write your name in it. Look. "L" "J." Here, let's fill up the boat. Whoa, whoa, whoa, be careful.

Teacher: Does he get the chance to play in sand a lot?

Parent No. 1: No, I don't like sand.

Teacher: No? How come?

Parent No. 1: 'Cause, it gets in your nails and it's [Inaudible] feeling.

Teacher: [Laughing] Well, I cannot tell 'cause he's doing a good job over there.

Parent No. 1: Let's see if we can scoop some of this up. [Video ends]

Emmy: OK. So, that was the socialization I was able to attend last fall, and the little boy stayed at the sand table for longer than I've ever seen a child. He was offered other activities, he was offered to go to the kitchen area and offered to go to the train, and he was like, "No, I'm not leaving the sand table." So, the home visitor came around and asked, you know, is this something that you enjoy with him? And the parent didn't like — doesn't like sand that much, so. And the home visitor, I think, handled that really well with just acknowledging with the laugh that, yes, we can understand that. So yeah.

So, the messy place, the opportunity to have a place where you can do things that you can't normally do at home. And then a lot of people, too, at the events have said that the families really like the make and take activities, so that's another idea.

Emily: I love that video, too, because there's sort of room for the parent to say, "I'm not really interested in sand play but I can appreciate how much my son is enjoying it," and that sort of thing, so. But yeah, so we have a question for you, for those of you who have gone to parents and asked them ... What have they told you they would like to do at socializations? Like when they help plan, what would they like to do? And let us know that in the chat.

Emmy: I'm seeing a lot of arts and crafts and make-and-take.

Emily: Fitness, interesting.

Emmy: Families love that.

Emily: Not a lot of feedback. I wonder maybe if ...

Emmy: Field trips.

Emily: there's a different way to ask parents. Edible slime, huh? That's what ...?

Emmy: [Laughing] Messy activities, right? Hands-on activities.

Emily: Yeah. Science. Uh huh. Things to take home maybe with a picture in it. Cooking, that sort of thing.

Emmy: Yoga, baby yoga.

Emily: Nice.

Emmy: Wow, what great ideas! I'm gonna have to download this chat so that I can ...

Emily: Scrapbooking. Yeah, that's a popular one. Movement.

Emmy: Block fest. Yeah.

Emily: Some parents say they're not so interested, so I think thinking about maybe more creative ways to pull them in, see what they really want to do. Like you were saying before, Emmy, talking ... Like what are their hobbies? What do they want to bring? I think it's always good to remember that there's a reason that the standards require home visits and socializations, are planned jointly by parents and families along with the home visitors, right? Because we want parents to really feel like the socializations are their time.

It's their time to use how they wish, to be with other parents, to talk to them, to watch their child and other children. If we're really engaging parents in the planning during own weekly home visits and then bringing that information together to plan the whole socialization, then parents are more likely to be engaged and participate, right, because they have a role in what's coming up. And then when we have families who might have children with delays or with disabilities, we really want to make sure that they're involved in helping us figure out, you know, what accommodations do we need to make, what kind of adaptations do we need to figure out so that the curriculum still is really appropriate for their child?

Emmy: I think those are such good points, because, I think, when you engage the families, I think sometimes we really want to ... It's easier in some regards if we just do it – planning ourselves. Again, that's probably a time issue, but really taking the time to engage the parents, have them have a role in the socialization and bring it up, you know, each time that you're on a home visit, it's like you have an opportunity to talk about that next socialization and what their role in that socialization might be.

So, one of the things that we've heard from peers over and over again and you touched on it a little bit already is that it's really important to create a sense of belonging. You're really establishing a community of parents and a community of peers. So, really feeling welcomed. We had centers that said that they put photos of the families, I mean like 11 by 13 photos of the family in the space that they used for socialization. Another program said that they put stars with everyone's name on it at the entrance and then the families would stop, you know,

and say, you know, "Here's your name and here's our photo," and that the families ended up bringing more photos in. They loved seeing their pictures up on the wall in the center, so it turned into something that people continued to contribute to.

So, they did a lot of work around photographs and creating some family photo albums, so that was really just an impetus for – for more engagement, but just making that space something that families feel welcome in. And they feel like it's their space, too.

Emily: That makes so much sense, Emmy, I really like that. I mean you think about sort of how important it is to feel welcomed somewhere or, you know, that we want teachers to welcome children as they come in and we ask them to put photos up of the children. And it makes a lot of sense that the same thing would help create a welcoming environment for families.

Emmy: Did somebody just share that they're having a clothing swap tomorrow? I had heard that idea before, I just think that's a great idea, and I think it's a great idea for parents and children. It's sort of like, you know, the whole family can get involved with that maybe. That's a great idea, I love it. So again, from some of these ideas that I have here are from the MyPeers Home Visiting Community. So, one of the things that we've heard on the MyPeers community is that it's really, you really have to just keep working at that. It's sort of like the engagement and raising your participation rate can be a pretty slow process.

So, it means, you know, you need to commit to it for the long haul, that, you know, you just continue to invite parents, you continue to have the conversation about what will help them get there or what might be appealing to them if there's something coming up that you know they're particularly interested in. 'Cause we've seen that once they get there and figure it out, how to get there and how to make it work in their schedules, that they really do love that, the peer support. But there's an example here on the slide of a program that does a brochure and it has family pictures in it and testimonials from families about their experience. Some programs have newsletters that they send out that have upcoming socialization information and fun activities to bridge the times in between socializations.

And I've heard the passport idea that when you come and participate in activities you get stamped for participation, participation of showing up and then for participating in the activities ... Extra points for leaving your cell phone at the door, those kind of ideas of things that would distract from engagement. And then another place there was a calendar with the dates for the whole year. They didn't fill in all the activities, but they did have the dates, and I've had a home visit in Maryland last year and they had the socialization calendar on the refrigerator right beside the pizza delivery number. So, it was in a very prominent place on the refrigerator, and then they could fill in the details if that came up, too.

Emily: Seen this a couple times now in the chat, people talking about families with social anxiety or just sort of general anxiety about going out, and I saw it ... I had a couple of thoughts, but, you know, maybe some of you in the chat would like to speak to that if you've had any success with supporting parents and getting out. But, you know, a couple things maybe would be having smaller socializations and maybe more frequently, maybe that's why the once a week socialization group was so popular.



And then another thought would be, again, sort of letting families take charge of what will happen and really letting them plan what the socialization will be and making sure they know exactly what's going on during the socialization, because sometimes it can help if people know what the plan is to get kinda past that anxiety. Like, OK, it's only gonna be one hour and the first 10 minutes is introduction and then we're gonna read a book and we're gonna talk about gross motor development, right? That it can be really helpful to have a plan and know what's gonna be coming for parents. And for children as well.

So, I think that's kinda one thing to think about. I love, I can't even keep up with the chat as you all are chatting, but I love that there are just great ideas being shared amongst each other, that you're enjoying each other's ideas. I think that that's probably the most exciting part of these webinars, right? And I just want to remind you that there's a community on MyPeers where you can continue this conversation. You know, one thing that we've actually discovered is that what you call your socialization can make a difference.

So, if you're saying come to our socialization and parents are like, "What does that mean?" "I don't need to be socialized, like that's kind of weird." You know, maybe if you call it a play group or, you know, a family time or something. I wonder if anybody has kinda changed the name of their socializations and if that might have increased attendance.

Emmy: Parent-child group, Little Wonders Extravaganza. Little chefs.

Emily: Oh my goodness. That's exciting.

Emmy: Peer group. Stay in Fridays. Wow, these are so creative! Someone, you know, going back a little bit to the last question, Emily, somebody was addressing the social anxiety question and they have evidently matched them up with someone that they knew from the group and so have sort of like went in together and they have that person they can hang out with and to help them become more comfortable.

So, I thought that was a really good one. So, I love these names, love these names, these are great. Family Fun and Learning Day. What is passport? The passport idea was like a booklet that, you know, like a real passport, where if you go attend a socialization, you get a stamp, and if you do an activity with your child or something, you decide what they get a stamp for, and they get their book stamped and then there's usually some type of incentive or something that they get when they fill out their passport. And just the fun.

The kids love that, too. They love the idea. They make them look like a real passport, so that's a fun idea. So, we have another — another video. This was a home visit I was able to go on last fall in Maryland, and it just so happened that the socialization topic came up and we just look and see how the home visitor wove socialization into the visit. [Video begins]

Home visitor: We can do that, no problem.

Parent No. 3: ... also got to spend some time with Chael yesterday.

Home visitor: You got to spend time with Chael yesterday?

Parent No. 3: They played hide and seek.

Home visitor: Ooh, yay! Where did you hide? Look at her smiling. Did you play inside or outside?

Parent No. 3: Where'd you go with Chael and Reba?

Child: I know, [Inaudible] in the house.

Home visitor: In the house?

Parent No. 3: Did you go down in the basement?

Child: Oh, yeah.

Parent No. 3: Oh, she did laundry? She got her on this little bike that it has pedals and you can pedal it, but it doesn't go anywhere. And she got on it and she was pedaling off, she could pedal, she said, "It's not going anywhere." And then she told Chael, she's like, "Chael, push me."

Home visitor: Nice problem-solving.

Parent No. 3: So, he pushed her around the basement.

Home visitor: Aww.

Parent No. 3: And they made laps around the basement.

Home visitor: Did you take turns on it? Yes?

Parent No. 3: She ... He has a Little Tikes car down there, too, so he got in it and she pushed him around.

Home visitor: Aww, how cute.

Parent No. 3: So, they were just taking turns, it was awesome.

Home visitor: Perfect timing for Friday, the social ... So, you practiced your bike skills, your pedaling. Yeah, 'cause we're gonna take a bike ride along the canal on Friday for our social event. Are you excited about it? You are? Miss [Inaudible] is, too. And guess what? I have some little friends, like itty bitty little friends, babies, who are coming along and their mommas are gonna push them in a stroller. So, you can ride around pedaling beside a stroller. Would you like to do that?

Parent No. 3: Want to see all the little babies?

Home visitor: Yeah. It's a little guy coming, and we have ... There's another little girl about her age that'll be coming, too. And she's new to the program this year, so you get to meet a new little friend this year. Exciting stuff. [Video ends]

Emmy: OK. So, I love that the home visitor was talking about how there will be, she knew that the child loved infants and babies so that she brought up that there's gonna be strollers there with babies and then also that there was a new little girl that was her age. So, really trying to connect those dots. So, could you share in the chat box now some of the ways that you involve parents in socializations? You've been sharing some really great ideas. So, how do you involve parents in planning for socializations?

Emily: If your parents aren't really involved in planning, if they're not really taking leadership positions, , you know, how are you talking to them about it? How are you – how are you thinking like, "Hey, this is really your space and your time and we want you to plan it?"

Emmy: I like that someone just shared that they have a role for the parents and I've heard that before that, you know, when they're planning it, it's sort of like you can share what the different roles are and let families pick which one, like whether that's set up or leading an activity or sharing a hobby or an interest or cleanup, whatever that is, it's just like you probably want to just have that when you enroll families, it's like this is what we do during home visits, this is what we do during socialization, so that expectation is out there. And, you know, you tell them up front from the very beginning from the first visit, we'll be talking about socializations every time we meet and we'll be planning those together.

So, it's sort of something that we have to get in the habit of doing. A lot of times we do "for" instead of "with," because that's our – our big hearts and the way that we do in the world, but I think that, you know, we have some opportunities to think about how engaging this can be if we take advantage of parents' ideas and really intentionally involve them in every aspect of the socializations. So, one of the things that came up today and always comes up when we talk about socializations is how long are the socializations? So, that's a question that we hear a lot, both out in the field and on MyPeers, again, so there's not a specified amount of time. So, what we've heard from programs, one program said that they used to do three hours and it was way too much time, especially for infants and toddlers.

So, they've cut it back to two hours. They do a half-hour of setup with the families helping and then a half-hour for the meal, and then 45 minutes for parent-child activities and then 15 minutes they take to debrief the activities and plan for the next visit. So, that sounded like a really – a really good plan from my perspective, and then I heard this really interesting idea recently that I had not heard before, and that this program offers socializations for five weeks in a row and then they took three or four weeks off.

And for some reason they had just drastically increased their socialization rate. For some reason, families just, they could commit to that five-week stretch and then know that they didn't do it for a while. So, that actually worked for their community, so I thought that was a really nice idea.

Emily: Yeah, thinking about what works for your families and finding out from them, asking them, you know, what is a good amount of time for you? Because it's, they know, right? So, a lot of people are saying between 90 minutes, two hours, some do three hours. Yeah, so we actually have another clip now from a PFC video called Bringing Families Together Building Community. So, this is a dad who's talking about his experience with getting to be around other parents. So yeah, let's hear from this father.

[Video begins]

Father: 'Cause I'm dad, I got stuff to do, you know, but as I kinda slowed my pace down and looked at things a little bit differently and, you know, hey, this is good for the community, hey, this is good for me, you know. And, hey, this is good for my daughter.

Narrator: A sense of connection and a whole new sense of community.

Father: I feel like I'm in the right place, the right time, doing the right thing. Right now that's all that matters, you know?

[Video ends]

Emily: I think we can talk a little bit about, sort of, the importance here of really reaching out to and including fathers. We want to engage fathers in socializations. There was a program in Oregon who took time to really focus on engaging fathers and came up with multiple strategies. One of them was to identify fathers who could take on a leadership role and be a role model for the other fathers and kind of work to bring them into the group. You know, they really took the time to talk with fathers and find out what they wanted to do, what's important to them, and asked fathers to bring those skills and interests into the group.

So, if what dads were really interested in was, you know, building a race car, then they had them come in and build a race car with their kids. And they enjoyed it so much that they brought other projects that they could do together. You know, and I think ... One thing I remember when I was working in a program, we did some focus groups about what do, what would increase father engagement in our program, and one thing that we heard from dads is, "We don't want to sit around and talk."

"We want to do things." And so, I love this like, you know, building something idea, like actually doing something, because I think, you know, for women I think sometimes it's easier. Not to overgeneralize, but I definitely can get together with other moms and chat for hours, and I, you know, I think dads are like we would like to actually do something.

So, giving that opportunity and particularly, you know, we think about many, many, many of the people who are in this profession are women, so we kind of bring to this our own perspective and our own ideas about what would be a good way to spend an hour and a half. And sometimes to find out what the fathers want we're really gonna have to go to the fathers and ask them and show them that we value what they say by doing what they say – what they say is important to them.

Emmy: So, that sort of makes me wonder, Emily, if we could ask everybody to share if they have asked for parents to share hobbies and interests at socializations, what have been the things that those families have shared? What kind of things have you gotten your parents to share with each other at socializations? And especially thinking about fathers, too, what kind of things might they have shared or been interested in? Breakfast with dads and father figures. And somebody else had pointed that out it's not always just dads, you know it's important for those male father figures to be in the picture even though they might not be the biological father.

Somebody's saying it's really not appropriate for building race cars with infants and toddlers, I think that's absolutely right. And I think that's a really good point that you have to have, if you have those mixed age groups, that you really have to have certain areas and different people working on different activities, and that's especially true, I think, with Early Head Start because these developmental progressions are so different between 3 month old and a 3 year old, so that's absolutely something that you have to take into consideration. Another thing we need to

think about is being linguistically responsive, so some of the ways you can do that is just make sure that you know what parents and children speak at home and incorporate the family's home language as much as possible, to utilize bilingual staff wherever you can, and to make sure that you're taking the needs of dual language learners into consideration.

So, this slide has some more ideas that we've heard from peers, and this idea was building on involving your community partners. So, one program shares that they had – that they hold community baby showers for the infants in their program and their families and that they get community partners to donate diapers and baby supplies and that it's really well attended and sort of that networking and connection that happens between parents at that baby shower actually carries over into the other socialization events that are held throughout the year.

So, that's sort of a hook and an idea to get people involved and then they build on that excitement that they, when parents connect with each other. I had heard several programs say that they partner with a food bank and that's the place where, you know, in addition to their socializations and interaction with peers that they could also take advantage of the local food bank. And then this idea I heard recently at a conference with a grantee that was partnering with a senior center and they had been doing that for three or four years.

So, they plan the socialization with the seniors, with family involvement, with staff involvement. The seniors do the cooking, they serve the families, they do book reading with the children and lots of arts and crafts and make-and-take activities. And this program said that the parents love it, the seniors love it, the children love it, and just they had something like an 85 to 90% participation rate. And, yes, they meet at the senior center.

So, they have the space and the meals and some really exciting volunteers that are loving that intergenerational interaction. So, we are getting close to wrap up time, so just want you to think about ways that you involve your community partners. And, Emily, I think you had another question you wanted to ask as well?

Emily: Yeah, you know we had a lot of strategies shared today, and especially from the people listening. Let's take a moment to think about what have you learned today and what might be an action step that you will take to increase parent engagement in socializations?

Emmy: Five weeks in a row. Yeah, the community baby shower. Good, I like that people have, looks like they have come away with some new ideas. So, we're gonna have to go ahead and move this along. I would like to invite you to continue this conversation on the MyPeers Home Visiting Community if you're not already a member, there's a link in your PowerPoint handout, and we'll have it up here on the screen in just a moment, but it will show you if you're not a member already this is the link down at the bottom of the page to join the MyPeers Home Visiting Community, continue to connect with each other and to share your ideas with each other, ask each other questions, brainstorm together, it's just a really great space to do that. Here is your evaluation link, and we're also gonna type that into the chat box.

So, if you go to the evaluation link and complete that, I know that we've had some audio and video issues today. We are trying to address that. The reason that we have some difficulties is there are so many of you that want to come together, you're sorta like stretching our capacity, but we are working on getting a new platform that can host, you know up to 1,000 is what we

have on these webinars for home visitors. We so appreciate your participation. So, don't give up on us. I'm gonna get this link back here. Thank you so much for all of the great ideas that you've shared today. I'm gonna post the recording of the webinar today along with the PowerPoint PDF and our handout on the MyPeers Home Visiting Community. Someone said they're having trouble downloading that. You should just be able to click on that and it should open up. But thanks everyone so much for your great participation. Thanks Emily ...

Emily: Thank you all.

Emmy: For being the co-host today.

Emily: Thank you so much for having me here.